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A REVIEW OF PRESENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO OLDER ADULTS IN CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM.

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ADMINISTRATORS OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ADULT SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR COLLEGES IN CALIFORNIA WERE SURVEYED IN MAY 1967 AS TO WAYS IN WHICH THEIR PROGRAMS WERE SERVING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ADULTS AGED 50 AND OVER. FINE ARTS, CRAFTS, HOMEMAKING, BUSINESS EDUCATION, AMERICANIZATION, CIVIC EDUCATION AND SPECIAL FIELDS, VOCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL ARTS, AND ENGLISH, SPEECH ARTS, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES WERE THE AREAS OF STUDY DRAWING THE GREATEST NUMBER OF OLDER ADULTS. ABOUT HALF THE SCHOOLS STATED THAT SPECIFIC CLASSES AND LECTURE SERIES FOR OLDER ADULTS HAD BEEN ORGANIZED, AND MOST ALSO REPORTED THAT OLDER ADULTS WERE BEING SERVED BY REGULAR COUNSELING PROGRAMS. TWELVE PRINCIPAL EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES, HEADED BY DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS AND INTERESTS SUITED TO LATER LIFE, RETIREMENT PLANNING, AND IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF AGING, WERE NAMED, TOGETHER WITH TEN PROBLEM AREAS RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION, FACILITIES, STAFFING, COMMUNITY COOPERATION AND SUPPORT, BUDGET LIMITATIONS, STUDENT MOTIVATION AND ATTENDANCE, AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS. (THE DOCUMENT ALSO INCLUDES 45 EXAMPLES OF COURSES AND LECTURE SERIES.) (LY)

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**A Review of Present Educational Opportunities  
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Adult Education Program**

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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# A Review of Present Educational Opportunities Available to Older Adults in California's Public Adult Education Program

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## **A REVIEW OF PRESENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO OLDER ADULTS IN CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

For the purpose of obtaining current information on the educational opportunities available to our older adults through California's public school adult education program, the Bureau of Adult Education in May, 1967, mailed a questionnaire on the education of the aging to administrators of adult education programs in adult schools and junior colleges. Specifically the questionnaire sought information as to the ways the adult education program is serving the educational needs of older adults. Ages 50 years and over were chosen as falling within the area of "aging." Information was sought on the nature of the organization and the responsibilities of local committees working with the problems of the aging. Administrators were asked to state the major problems involved in planning and organizing educational programs for older adults and to indicate any plans for the future. Approximately 50 percent (156) of the administrators responded to the questionnaire. A summary of the information gathered from the questionnaire is presented in the following paragraphs.

The administrators were asked to check on a form provided the areas of study in the regular program in which there were a fair concentration of older adults. The following areas and the frequency of their listings are indicated below:

1. Fine Arts - 74
2. Crafts - 69
3. Homemaking - 68
4. Business Education - 57
5. Americanization - 47
6. Civic Education and Special Fields - 43
7. Industrial Education - Vocational and Industrial Arts - 40
8. English, Foreign Languages, and Speech Arts - 36

Approximately one-half of the schools reporting indicated that specific classes were organized for older adults. The titles of some of the classes primarily organized for older adults are as follows:

1. Arts and Crafts
2. Retirement Planning
3. Leadership Training for Mature Adults

4. Lip Reading
5. Dactylology
6. Gerontology
7. Choral Instruction (Senior Citizens' Chorus)
8. Spanish for Older Adults
9. Driver Improvement for Senior Citizens
10. Clothing Construction
11. Citizenship and Elementary English
12. Physical Exercises for Older People
13. Public Affairs and World Affairs (Current Events)
14. Music Appreciation
15. Practical Gardening
16. Understanding the Older Adult
17. Painting
18. Investment and Securities
19. Consumer Education for Homemakers
20. Applied Psychology
21. New Horizons for Mature Workers
22. Home Health Aides

Information was also sought as to lecture series that were specifically concerned with the problems of aging. Quite a number of our adult educators reported lecture series specifically planned for the older adult. Examples of titles of lecture series reported are as follows:

1. Retirement Planning
2. Psychological Aspects of Aging
3. Health for Senior Citizens
4. World Religions

5. Personal Improvement
6. Health Education for Diabetics
7. Financial Planning and Tax Benefits
8. Estate Planning
9. Medicare and What It Means To You
10. Services to Older Adults
11. Nutrition and Food Preparation
12. Fraud and Medical Quackery
13. California's Diminishing Resources
14. Social Security Benefits
15. Consumer Education for Limited Budgets
16. Preparing a Will
17. Give Your Heart a Fighting Chance
18. Trends in Modern Literature
19. Living in Later Life
20. Role of the Aged from Primitive Society to Modern Times

Most of the adult educators reported that the older adults are served through the school's regular counseling program. The adults over fifty who are interested in elementary certificates and high school diplomas are given special encouragement and counseling time. Older adults avail themselves of the testing services and individual counseling. The nature of the counseling includes the encouragement of adults to develop interests and skills in new fields through a planned educational program. Group guidance opportunities are provided through gerontology and psychology classes. Gathering information on job opportunities in the community for older adults was listed as guidance activity. One school reported a full-time state employment representative on campus to provide current employment information. The guidance staff in a number of instances work closely with senior citizen groups, the older age specialist in the Department of Employment, the Social Security offices, social welfare agencies, and boarding and convalescent home operators. The Los Angeles City Schools report a gerontology specialist for their adult education program.

In rating the tasks of major concern to adult schools and junior colleges in the field of aging, the administrators listed the following in the order of their importance:

1. Developing skills and interests appropriate to advancing years
2. Planning for retirement
3. Developing a better understanding of the physiological and psychological changes incident to aging
4. Developing the attitudes and outlooks appropriate to a changing family life
5. Developing mental hygiene practices and increased mental health and emotional security
6. Planning through consumer education for a more economical way of living
7. Training to overcome physical handicaps such as hard of hearing, heart disease, and so forth
8. Training of older citizens for more active participation in public affairs
9. Training people to work with older adults
10. Improving the level of community understanding about the aging process
11. Vocational and educational guidance for older adults
12. Retraining for full-time or part-time jobs

Approximately 50 percent of the adult educators reporting indicated that there is a local committee working with the problems of the aging. Numerous agencies are represented on the local committee. The ones most frequently mentioned are the Community Welfare Council, social welfare, recreation department, senior citizen groups, church groups, public library, Red Cross, Chamber of Commerce, mental health associations, Salvation Army, service clubs, social security, employment, and city and county health departments. In most every instance the local adult administrator is either a member or serves as a consultant or advisor to the group. The administrator works cooperatively with the groups and leaders of the community in determining the educational needs of adults.

There are some excellent examples of the cooperative efforts of several agencies in organizing the educational programs for older adults. A course in "Understanding the Older Adults" for use in adult education classes was prepared under the auspices of the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools and the California State Department of Social Welfare.

The impetus for this course of study came through requests from the non-profit and proprietary homes for the aged in southern California, licensed by the California State Department of Social Welfare. The course is intended to assist operators, administrators, and staff of homes for the aged in a better understanding of the older adult through an increased awareness of his psychological and physical needs and the ways of meeting these needs. The course was formulated in a trial draft in 1963 and tested in three different teaching situations in the adult education programs of Long Beach and Los Angeles City and revised in 1966 in accordance with the outcome of these pilot projects.

Another example of the cooperative efforts of several agencies in the community is the pre-retirement program offered by the Los Rios Junior College District and the adult education division of the Sacramento Unified School District. The Community Welfare Council was responsible for organizing an adult education committee within the committee on aging, which included representation from the adult education divisions of the schools in Sacramento County. This committee was responsible for organizing a pre-retirement lecture series, which has been presented twice a year for the last several years. The topics included in the lecture series are as follows: viewing retirement, nature of work and leisure, insurance planning, wills and property management, investments, government retirement plans, social security and medicare, budgeting, employment, frauds, physical health and nutrition, mental health, philosophy of life, and living arrangements. The schools offering these series have reported excellent attendance. The significant part of this effort is the fact that the schools are continuously evaluating and improving their programs in close cooperation with other agencies represented on the committee.

In the field of driver education for older adults, meetings have been held in Long Beach, Menlo Park, Santa Cruz, and Paradise to consider the problems of the older driver. These meetings were held in senior citizen centers. Representatives of the State Department of Motor Vehicles, California Commission on Aging, State Department of Education, as well as local adult school people participated in the deliberations. One of the specific outcomes of these meetings was the organization of a driver improvement class (behind the wheel and classroom instruction) at Paradise High School. Among the other outcomes from these meetings was the realization that such a program to be successful must avail itself of all possible communication media, including television, as well as the preparation of written materials for distribution. It was suggested that classes in driver improvement could be conducted informally in senior centers under the leadership of older adults and, as preparation for this role, an adult education class in training volunteer leaders could be offered.

A review of the questionnaire indicated that the following problems are of major concern to adult educators in the planning and organizing of educational programs for older adults:

1. Transportation to and from school
2. Finding suitable meeting places for classes
3. The need for more day classes and with it the problem of finding adequate facilities and teachers
4. Budget limitations of the school district to provide educational programs for older adults
5. Lack of motivation and interest on the part of older adults for planned types of educational experiences
6. Identifying the real educational needs of older adults
7. Finding well-qualified teachers with specific training and appreciation of the problems on aging
8. Securing community cooperation and support for educational programs
9. Maintaining satisfactory and consistent attendance
10. Lack of good lay leaders

